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ABSTRACT

A total of eight focused group discussions, each with 12 participants, were held in Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Denver, and Houston to examine participants' television viewing habits, attitudes toward television, and perceptions of public versus commercial programs. Analysis of the results revealed a similar breakdown of response to television among all the groups. Among the major findings were that television played a number of roles for respondents, including those of entertainment source, escape mechanism, casual companion, educational tool, and filler for unstructured time; that those who believed television was worthwhile were more likely than others to plan their viewing; that the problem of choice of programs did not arise frequently because of multiple television sets in homes; that many of the women enjoyed soap operas but not sports, while the opposite was true for many of the men; that shows most often disliked were those considered superficial, ridiculous, or racy; that "Roots" and "Holocaust" were valued greatly by almost all respondents; that public television was seen as educational but was also perceived to be humorless, unexciting, and repetitious, while commercial television programs were seen as having more interest and variety; and that a more important role for public television was predicted for the future. (GW)

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A Qualitative Study:

The Effect of Television on People's Lives

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The aim of this four-city study was to discover how representative television viewers interacted with their television sets, what their viewing habits were, how they planned for their viewing time, which members of the family had a strong say-so in program selection, what type and what specific programs were liked and disliked and what programs or televised events had made a strong impact on them. In addition, the study attempted to explore areas of evaluation, such as how viewers would regard the worthwhileness of the time spent watching the tube. In addition, the probe extended to attitudes concerning public and commercial broadcasting and how these respondents used these two transmitters of programming and how they compared them. Finally, the survey hoped to monitor opinions as to both the present and the future magnitude and type of impact these interviewees felt could come from television in general.

METHOD

Eight focus group sessions were held, two in Philadelphia, July 17; two in Minneapolis, July 18; two in Denver, July 19; and two in Houston, July 20.

The specs for each group were:

1) Six women, six men
2) Spread in age 18 - 60
3) Working and nonworking
4) Urban and suburban
5) A spread in income
6) Racial and ethnic minorities represented
7) Half watched Public TV in addition to Commercial TV, and could correctly identify a program that they watched in the past two weeks

A WORD OF CAUTION

As with all qualitative research, the indications are to be viewed as suggestive, rather than definitive. The emphasis in this project is primarily on the quality of what the respondents say and the implications of their feelings and emotions. The pertinence and importance of any comment and finding develop as a particular point comes up in various sessions, and are manifested in one way or another by the respondents in the different sessions.

Qualitative research can:

- Develop hypotheses about the subject.
- Obtain insights into the social processes of group interaction as it relates to the subject, as well as how they discuss it.

Qualitative research cannot:

- Quantify any of the above so that a "representative" picture is obtained.
- Determine how the market will react behaviorally to a subject that group participants have discussed.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The survey among television viewers in four major American cities conducted in July of 1978 produced results that tended to indicate that people in varying sections of the country revealed just about the same breakdown in opinions as to the importance and role of television in their lives. Agreement and discord constantly arose over very much the same points. Individual opinions may have been in opposition within any one discussion, but overall the temper of discussion tended to be remarkably similar.

Most of the respondents, for starters, appeared to entertain very much the same ideas as to what leisure meant to them: the chance to do what they wanted when they wanted to do it without any kind of external pressure brought to bear on them. Television was seen as a natural source of leisure-time amusement since it so readily lent itself to the midweek evening need for relaxation. Most often it was said that television was

used in this way because the working day developed a fatigue that precluded any more exertive kind of leisure time use. Also, it was pointed out, that programs were better during the week than on the weekend. Weekends were said to be for more adventurous fun, family outings, visits, the indulging of hobbies.

Many of the respondents said that their television sets were on as much as 40 or 50 hours a week, but that a great deal of this time the figures on the screen were playing to empty houses in that the sets served as casual company, background noise, a slight distraction while doing something else. Whatever their habits, the respondents listed a slew of roles for television in the home, including that of entertainment source, escape mechanism, trouble allayer, a companion, an educational tool, a source of discussion within the family, and, more negatively, as a hard-to-break habit, as a filler for unstructured time, as a substitute for family exchange.

Those who said that they thought television was a worth-

while pursuit tended to stress its capacity to convey important information, to educate, and, quite frankly, to supply needed, easily available and cheap entertainment. Those that accounted time spent with their sets as something of a loss stressed its habitual nature and the guilt they felt at wasting time with something that contributed nothing to their lives. Very often these people cited activities that they regretted either giving up entirely or at present scanting, activities such as housework, letter-writing, music-listening, gardening, reading, socializing, going to the theater or movies, painting, playing sports, creating something, serving the community in some way, or simply thinking more about life in general.

Those that accounted time spent with television worthwhile were far more likely to plan their viewing, usually by consulting television guides published in the Sunday newspapers. Daily newspapers and TV Guide also were seen to play their part. Several interviewees even spoke of making a checklist and then bringing it up to

date on a daily basis. Those that were most likely to say that television was not especially worthwhile or that it had a baleful influence on their lives were just those people who did not plan viewing but were channel switchers, knob jockies, or just people who turned on their sets automatically and left them on.

A great number of the interviewees said they decided for themselves what they were going to watch, but an equal number spoke about deferring to the wishes of their husbands, wives, and, especially, their children. Many spoke of making compromises according to time of day or the intensity with which one really wanted to watch a particular program. In perhaps a majority of families, however, it was said the problem of choice did not arise that often because multiple sets were available. Interestingly, many of these people said that even though there was more than one set in the household, viewing was often indulged in as a family activity so that family fare experienced in one room was considered the best solution to any dispute.

When asked to name some favorite programs, a plethora of titles came to the fore. The only strong pattern was that many of the women said they loved soap operas and did not care for sports, while a good number of the men stated the absolute reverse. In the listing of preferred fare, everything from live opera to Charlie's Angels got mentioned. Reasons for approval centered on the professionalism and polish with which these programs were executed almost as much as their content, be it informational or entertaining. Very often the respondents said they liked certain programs because they "involved" them.

Shows that were disliked were often those that were preferred by others in the group, but most often those named most readily were those that were considered superficial, ridiculous, cartoony, or racy in content. Several shows, such as The Gong Show, The Waltons, Little House on the Prairie, All in the Family, Columbo, and Charlie's Angels consistently made it onto both favored and disfavored lists.

What particular television experiences, however, had

made a truly sizable impact on their lives or at least an impression that would not soon disappear? Several spoke of events in recent history or sports that had been witnessed via television or, indeed, certain informational or even entertainment programs, but practically to a man they spoke about Roots and Holocaust. These were valued, they indicated, because of their historical content, because they were about problems and crises that were still very much alive and because their "realism" had been handled with lavish artfulness that succeeded not only in making their subject palatable but entertaining as well. Many mentioned the extraordinary ends to which they went to insure that they not miss a single segment of these two series. Although a few said they did not like the successive-night scheduling pattern because it expropriated too much of their lives, others emphasized the necessity of having seen Roots or Holocaust if one ever intended to hold up one's own in the sessions of social intercourse that followed their showing. Other programs were mentioned as having the capacity to excite subsequent

discussion among friends and colleagues, but none appeared to have this power to the extent that Roots and Holocaust did. Men might chat about football, or women might catch up on a missed soap opera segment, or a joke from Saturday Night Live might be exchanged, but these were minor in comparison.

Similarly, it was seen that series on public television, while indulged in by many of the viewers, also did not contribute extensively to post mortems. This was either because viewers were in a minority position in their circles and basically did not have too many acquaintances with whom comments might be shared or because--and this seemed to be more important--their basic content did not have the controversial immediacy of these hit series.

If Roots and Holocaust, like favorite regularly scheduled entertainment programs, were intimately associated in these respondents' minds with commercial television, what most appeared to be liked to public television was the notion that it was "educational" more than anything else. This was because it had had its start as a

source of adult instructions, because it still specialized in instruction for people with special interests, because its main function was the presentation of educational programming for children, and because, even when it was in a more adult entertaining frame of mind, that entertainment was serious, demanding, highbrow, special and therefore "educational." The function of public television was to educate. Commercial television was there to entertain.

Those that took a broader and basically more positive view of public television praised it for its cultural programming, its ability to stimulate, for information conveyed, its constructive programming, its ability to broaden horizons more than commercial television does, and for being uncensored.

On the other hand, certain negative perceptions of public television in comparison with commercial programming quickly came forward, i.e., that it was humorless, unexciting, too demanding, not relaxing, that no stars ever appeared on it, that it was repetitious because there

was no competition among public channels (as with commercial broadcasting), that it was technically amateurish, that it was too locally oriented to be interesting, that it was too English, that its dramas all happened a long time ago or in England.

In contrast, commercial television was said to be able to hold interest better (because it recognized people's short attention spans), to have better movies, to have more variety, to have something for everyone. People who did not watch public television, they offered, did not do so because they were afraid it would be dry, static, because they didn't want any more education than they already had, because it required effort, and because the desire for family viewing did not correspond to what public television scheduled. It was said, too, that in general one had to prepare more for viewing something on public television, find out more, make time for it--and a note about that time--than one did with a commercial television event.

To sharpen further the perception of attitudes toward

public and commercial television the respondents said that if Roots or Holocaust had been produced on public television they would not have had any stars, that production values would have been scanted, that the material would have been treated more like a documentary, and that the stories would have been more factual and more intimately handled. Some thought it would be longer and more detailed, others shorter because the commercial networks had artificially lengthened the episodes, that the acting wouldn't have been as good, and that, in general, the look of the programs would have been impoverished.

Another exercise involved an attempt to assemble a profile of the public television viewer as opposed to the commercial viewer. Several said that public viewers were more choosy, more intellectual, more eager for information and education, less interested in violence and sex, more affluent, whereas commercial watchers were the younger people, the unwashed, the masses. However, it was also apparent that there was a prevalent unwillingness that outweighed these statements to stigmatize

any portion of the viewing public. Far more of these respondents said people of all types watched both kinds of television.

Still, when it came to trying to imagine what certain well-known figures preferred--public or commercial television--the distinctions indicated above were more reinforced than not.

Since much was said during the course of these discussions about the entertainment value of so many--especially the drama series--of the offerings on public television, there was an attempt to find out why more people did not watch such shows as Upstairs, Downstairs and I, Claudius. Some said they had thought these would be too highbrow for them or too special, but mostly they indicated they were simply not aware of what these programs were, that they in general did not watch more public television because publicity and promotion were lacking and listings were incomplete. In addition, and perhaps most significantly, they said they did not watch programs on public television, even ones they had heard

good things about, because they felt they were geared to watch commercial television, that this was an old tradition, a habit it would be hard to break. They said they generally stuck to what they knew.

The respondents were also asked toward the end of the sessions to mention what sort of programs they would like to see in the future. Many asked for more and better entertainment, but perhaps a majority indicated that they would like to see programs of more important content. They suggested that commercial television was on its way to excellence as a conveyor of information à la public television and that public television would do well to rid itself of every approach that could be considered arid and tiresomely academic.

When the respondents came to assessing what they considered the impact of television up to now, they were just about equally divided between positive and negative replies. Some felt that people today were better informed because of television, better entertained, more sophisticated, brought closer together. But also

there were replies deploring the imitation of television violence, passivity, family disruption, the lowering of moral standards, the corruption of children, homogenization of standards and values, even malaise because of knowing too much about what was going on in the world.

Perhaps predictions for the future leaned more heavily on the wary than on the optimistic side. Several said they feared more control over the individual as a possible television development and increased dependence on the tube for all kinds of functions. Many said that television could not help but improve and become more of a medium for education. A good number of respondents added, however, that they thought television's influence--for either good or ill--would wane because its novelty would wear off, because people would get tired of it, and because they detected already in their children signs that other means of passing time were preferred. In any case, the indication was that these people felt public television would generally have a more important role than it had today in any impact on the American population and that even commercial television would become more like its public brother.

HYPOTHESES

* Regionalism plays little part in individuals' responses to television values.

* The widespread identification of leisure with not being required to do anything in particular at anyone else's behest fits in very well with the use of television as an undemanding source of entertainment.

* Many more people associate television with weekday relaxation than with weekend special events.

* A great deal of television watching isn't watching at all but rather the use of the set as a sound-making and image-producing presence that would be more noticed by its absence than by any particularities of its presence.

* Many viewers indulge in television only as a subsidiary activity to complement other pastimes or chores.

* People tend to regard most forms of entertainment as rather expensive, thereby boosting the role of television in the home as a source of amusement that costs almost nothing.

* Many people harbor deep regrets that they watch television as much as they do. They regret not only the habit but other activities that they say television is taking the place of.

* Many people regard television as a valuable source of information and as a means of immediate contact with the rest of the world that they place second to none.

* Many people justify their many hours of television watching as needed because of the effort they expend during their working day.

* People who feel that television is worthwhile tend to plan their viewing week with a great deal more care and thought than those who watch it out of habit or because they cannot think of anything else to do.

* The Sunday paper is the most frequently observed source of television programming information.

* Many families think of television viewing as an activity that should be indulged in by the family as a unit. Many of these same people then use what they have seen as a spur to communication. Others, however, are just as likely to substitute the viewing experience for any kind of inter-family communication.

* Most families no longer argue about what is to be looked at on television because of the frequency of households with multiple sets.

* Favorite programs are as likely to be dubbed so because of the skill with which they are presented as much as for their content.

* Programs that have made an impact are those that have given the viewer the sense that he has been able to participate in some discovery of

historical truth. This sense can be found in the broadcast of live events or in the skillful reworking of the issue-relevant past.

* Viewers enjoy the special demands made on them by a program that they know is being shared by their peers, and they will take extensive steps to remain au courant about it.

* There is a sizable sentiment against successive-night series, sometimes to the point of deciding not to get involved in any part of them.

* Public television is still, to a great extent, thought of as educational television. The non-watching or infrequent-watching public has a difficult time appreciating the notion that material relayed through public television can have the same entertainment values as it could on commercial television.

* Among non- or infrequent viewers of public television it is frequently thought that public television's chief function is its programming for children.

* Public television in its adult programming is thought of as demanding and hard work by a good number of viewers and therefore unable to fit in with their need to relax.

* Many viewers of public television will watch programs that are ostensibly aimed to entertain and still believe that they are undergoing some sort of educational experience.

* People will tend to deny that there is a typical public or a typical commercial television viewer, but they nevertheless retain deeply held stereotypes that pretty much follow the line that public television is somehow elitist and that commercial television is made for the masses.

* Even when people have an inkling that there might be something on public television that interests them, they are not very likely to try watching it because of a deep-seated belief that the content or its presentation would be difficult and austere, because they do not hear enough about the programs through advertising and promotion, and because they feel they are simply not in the habit of watching anything but the offerings of the three major commercial networks. They feel safer sticking to what they know.

* Many people will say that they want more programs with meaningful content in the future.

* People do rate television's present impact on them as significant. Some feel it has been deleterious because it has substituted for more worthwhile activities or because it has publicized a philosophy that is antagonistic

to their perceptions. Others, however, feel that their lives have been greatly enriched by its informational capacity.

* People tend to be more nervous about the future in that many seem to fear that television will exert greater control over their lives.

* A countervaling opinion has it, however, that no matter what the intention of television, people will simply be less interested in it than they are at present.

* There is considerable sentiment abroad that public television will play a greater role in the future, that commercial television will become more like public television, and that informational content will be of paramount importance.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Eight focus group sessions in four representative cities across the United States (Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Denver, and Houston) produced remarkably consistent results in a recent examination of television viewing habits, attitudes, and perceptions of public versus commercial program watching. In each group, which was composed of a cross section of tastes and biases, one constantly met a similar breakdown of thinking and response regarding this home medium. In some cases the discoveries were surprising; in all they were revealing. But most remarkably the findings tended to be mutually supportive and very seldom contradictory. Regionalism or local conditions of any kind at best played a most minor role in this research, either in time spent in front of the television set, in the way it was spent, in program preference and expectation, or in the understanding of what the effect of that programming might be. Even when one session stressed certain aspects of the

television phenomenon that other sessions did not cover, the evidence accumulated tended to dovetail rather than strongly qualify. If it has ever been suggested that one of the presumed effects of three decades of mass television appreciation has resulted in a certain homogenization of response in this country--and, interestingly enough, very few of these respondents did suggest that such a phenomenon had occurred--this investigation would go a great deal of the way toward substantiating that proposition.

The meaning of leisure and television's role in it

The idea of leisure, relaxation, unwinding, enjoyment without effort expended played an extremely important role in the feelings of these interviewees concerning television. Many of them readily said that television was one of their most frequently indulged-in forms of leisure-time activities. Although many noted that leisure-time pursuits often included activities that required some output, such as sports, gardening, crafts,

and travel, many also cited relatively passive notions of leisure time such as movie-going, stereo-listening, socializing casually, loafing, smoking, killing time, daydreaming, actually doing nothing in particular, and, of course, watching television. This idea of leisure as release coincided with the many statements made that leisure was best served by an attitude that predicated one's sovereignty over all decisions to do something or not to do it.

- Leisure is free time. It's something you can look forward to when there's no pressure on you.
- Leisure is what I want to do when I want to do it.
- Leisure is anything not job-related. It's choosing what I want. It's my time.
- Leisure is when I don't have to answer to anybody else. It's when I'm free of responsibility.

The refrain of leisure being what one wants to do when one wants to do it came up at almost every session and tied in very closely with the role of television in these people's lives. One person said that the choice

of leisure activity depended on energy level, and the watching of television was consequently seen as an "activity" that accorded very well with times when that level was rather low.

This attitude was further substantiated by the finding that many of the respondents said they tended to do the greater portion of their television watching during the week as an anodyne to the daily grind of work and family routine rather than on the weekend when the limits of leisure choices were expanded.

- After a hard day's work, television is more relaxing. I don't want to do anything physical. On the weekend, though, there's time to go to the beach or go camping.
- You can make more elaborate plans for your time during the weekend.

A few said their viewing time was extremely limited during the week, so that they, in contrast, did tend to watch more television of a weekend, but these were in the minority. Furthermore, it was broadly implied that the quality of television entertainment during

the week was superior to that available during the weekend. It was said, too, that time of year played its part in watching patterns, with winter, when families were confined to the home more often, being a more popular time to watch the tube than summer, when the opportunities of the outdoor world came into play.

TV time--passive and active

The amount of time said to be spent with the television set varied enormously and, of course, according to usage. Several of the respondents said the set was on only an hour or so a day on the average, while others admitted that it might be on as many as 40 or 50 hours a week, not counting supplemental operation of other household sets. This disparity did not necessarily mean the household with a 50-hour-a-week habit was glued to the set seven times as much as a seven-hour-a-week home. On the contrary, for it was discovered that many individuals tended to think of their television sets as providers of background noise. It was

frequently said that for them television was company. This was, as might have been expected, much more true of women than of men--women who spent their days at home involved in the running of their households.

> - The kids are off at school, my husband is at the office, or he travels a lot, so I like to have the television set on a lot to keep from feeling so alone.

In this television was seen to be taking the place of radio or recorded background music, almost as if the fact of its being there made it the prime candidate for this function, habit more than suitability pushing it ahead of radio, phonographs, or tape recorders. In addition, many of these heavy users said that even if the set captured their attention sufficiently to look at it, that this did not mean they relinquished all other occupations.

> - I never sit down in front of the television set unless I have something to do with my hands, like sewing or knitting or darning.

Some even said that they simultaneously indulged in

activities that were less automatic than those that kept the hands in motion, activities such as reading or card playing.

It should be added here, though, that if the stated amounts of time watching television were averaged, the figure would come probably somewhere in the 15-to-20-hours-per-week range. Care should be taken, however, not to take these estimates too literally, for no proviso was offered in many cases as to how those hours were used, and often, also, the impression was strong that a number of respondents tended to minimize their estimates so as to appear less dependent on their television sets as a means of entertainment.

Television's role

What then was television to these people? What function did it play? What value was placed upon its presence in the home?

As stated, many respondents said they regarded television as a source of companionship. Others said they thought

of it as a baby-sitter for their children. The perceptions did not stop there by any means.

- Television is the cheapest source of entertainment available nowadays.
- TV makes it so you can put off what you have to do.
- TV is the greatest excuse for laziness ever invented.
- It takes my mind off my work.
- It takes my mind off my troubles. When I watch the soap operas, I realize that I don't have it so bad.

Some of the respondents during this early stage of the inquiry saw television in a strongly positive light, as delivering strong value for the time spent watching it.

- It's a friend, a much needed diversion.
- TV can be educational. It can teach you things.
- It's an entertainer.
- TV makes you discuss things, things you wouldn't otherwise talk about. Like with your children. There was a program called James at Fifteen about a boy's first sexual experience. My son saw it, so we had a talk about what the program said. We might not have got to the subject as easily if it hadn't been for that program.

- TV is a convenience. You don't have to leave your house to be entertained. The great thing about television is that it is <u>there</u>.

Many spoke of specific reasons for watching television and mentioned the kinds of programs--sports, specials, comedy, adventure, and fantasy series that they said were important items on their tube agenda. Many also mentioned news programs--either straight reportage or commentary--that figured prominently in their reasons for watching television. But, at the same time, a number of respondents also testified to watching the instrument with a kind of reluctance born of a basically negative attitude to what they were doing.

- For me television is a habit, pure and simple. It's addictive.
- I watch TV when I have nothing better to do.
- I don't have any particular interests or hobbies, so when I come home from work I turn on the television.
- I think of TV as a nuisance. It's killing communication between members of the family.

- TV is wrecking the family because of the stuff they have on about sex and abortion.

- I watch television out of boredom.

Is television worthwhile?

Naturally, feelings about whether the watching of television was a worthwhile pursuit, whether the respondents decided the time spent in front of the set presented them with any dividends, depended a good deal on whether they basically espoused a positive or negative attitude toward the medium itself. Those that said that on the whole they thought of their viewing hours as worthwhile most frequently cited the informational possibilities of television as suitably forceful reasons for thinking television valuable. Very often the respondents said they appreciated what television could do for them because it had brought into their homes events of importance they could otherwise never have witnessed or because it took them to parts of the world they could never expect to visit. This "eye-on-the universe" aspect turned up in almost every group. Other

respondents stated they felt their viewing time worthwhile because television could be educational, although it was not entirely clear at all times whether they were judging this brand of worthwhileness in terms of themselves or in relation to their children. And still others quite frankly stated that television was worthwhile to them because they found profit in being entertained, in being relaxed, in enjoying the unwinding that a television set was deemed so gifted at effecting. One respondent said that television was worthwhile because it enabled you to "dissolve" into the mindlessness of the entertainment and thereby restore your forces.

Those who declared they did not think that their viewing time was in the main worthwhile stressed the passivity of the viewing experience, the puerile content of what was offered in the majority of television programming and what television was substituting for in their lives. Many spoke of watching television of an evening and then feeling somewhat like the proverbial

Western consumer of Chinese food, i.e., that within an hour or so nothing remained with them. They often said they resented this sensation of emptiness but also indicated they thought of themselves as powerless to break the habit. Guilt appeared to play an important part in the judgment of the individual's use of his television set.

It was interesting to take note of what many of these respondents--both those that evaluated their watching hours positively and those with an overall sense of regret--said about what they would do if they had no television to watch, if they were thrown back on their own resources and were returned to a pre-home-screen world.

- I guess I'd do my housework better. With television I'm always putting things off.
- I'd write more letters, read more books, and spend more time with the children.
- I'd paint the house.
- I'd play the stereo more, or maybe listen to the radio.

- I'd garden and read the newspaper, probably visit with the neighbors more than we do now.

- If there was no television, I'd have more time for introspection.

- Maybe I'd go to the movies.

- Maybe I'd go to the Guthrie. I don't think I've read a book or been to a play or a movie since we've had television in our house.

- I'd go back to painting in oils.

- I'd practice my golf game.

- If there were no television I might go back to doing some volunteer work.

- I'd be more active in general.

- I'd be more creative.

Planning time

The question of considering television watching a worthwhile activity (or passivity) also had its reflection in the manner in which these respondents either planned or did not plan their viewing hours. Many said they rarely looked at any programming schedule as an aid to making up their minds whether to view or not, but were

either controlled by the habit of watching certain programs regularly, especially news programs or those with regularly repeated installments, or by the habit of merely turning on the set when they wanted to watch something. These people styled themselves as dial-flippers or channel-changers and appeared quite content with their improvisatory approach to their television sets.

On the other hand, a significant number cited printed television schedules as the source of a plan for regular viewing. Most of these people said they regularly looked at the Sunday newspaper supplements, and some indicated they made a notation as to which programs they might like to watch. Some also said they either kept these guides by their sets or consulted the daily newspaper listings to reconfirm their weekly check. Many, of course, said that they used only the daily listings, and others mentioned TV Guide specifically, although it was not always clear whether that magazine or simply the newspaper TV guide was meant. There was also an indication that viewers combined consulting

practices in that they would watch their regular programs without checking them against listings but would also plan their supplementary viewing with the help of a printed schedule.

Whose set is this?

Of course, all the planning in the world, checkmarks, and subscriptions to a program guide of some sort, and keeping the Sunday supplement close at hand throughout the week might come to nought if an individual's desires went against the wishes of the household member who effectively had the final say as to what was to be watched. Who was this person?

In many cases there was no hesitation on the part of the respondents in saying that their own choice was final and that other family members had to give way in the face of their wishes. The men were particularly adamant when it was a case of special sports events, or even regular ones like baseball and football. Others said that the children in their household tended to control viewing

choices but were asked to relinquish that prerogative if something of particular interests to the adult members of the family were scheduled. Whenever it was a case of children deciding what was to be watched it was usually to be inferred that these were households in which the viewing of television was regarded with more passive acceptance than with active involvement. Husbands who said they let their wives choose also strongly suggested that they used television as a "dissolve" mechanism and were not especially caring about what fed it.

However, the question of who chooses to view what was offset to a great extent by the fact that many of these interviewees came from homes where there were two and three sets for the family to use. Some said they had more than one color set, so the question of who got to watch what under the most favorable circumstances was also vitiated. Many, too, said they had no objection to viewing a program that was of interest only to them on a secondary set (black and white or color set in a second-choice location) if the rest of the family was

adamant about pursuing its collective choice on the number-one set in the number-one location. It should be noted here, however, that there was a frequent expression of the feeling that television could be a collective activity that absorbed the family's attention as a unit. For these folks, the set appeared indeed to have taken the place of the hearth, and therefore individual program preference ranked far behind in importance to the fact of a family being together, ostensibly doing something as a group.

In some instances the families appeared to have come to a practical modus vivendi that would effectively obviate a potential dispute.

- My wife rules the set during the day. I get to decide what to watch when I come home in the evening.
- My husband decides what we watch until he falls asleep.
- We don't have any conflict because we don't watch it at the same time.
- It depends on how intensely somebody feels about a program before a choice is made.
- My children decide what to watch, but I always keep veto power, and I also tell them to turn it off when I want it off.

Favorite and unfavorite viewing

The programs mentioned as the possible causes of dispute, that is, favorite programs that these respondents said they preferred (or detested), shows that would cause them to leave the presence of the primary set or register an adamant veto power for, unsurprisingly ranged all over the board. Certain broad generalities could be drawn from what was said, but they would be only the most obvious ones, that is, that a good many of the women said they loved to watch soap operas and did not enjoy sports events, and the reverse: men saying they doted on sports programs and could not fathom the appeal of soap operas. Otherwise as often as not many would cite a favorite program only to have it termed by a session colleague as a definite bête noir, and this by members of the same sex. The response to this phase of the inquiry was so broad and so all-encompassing throughout the eight sessions that it might best serve the purposes of this report to pursue the answers as they were given in one of the liveliest and most divergent of the groups--the second Minneapolis gathering.

Favorite programs here were M*A*S*H (several), Nova, Phil Donahue, Gunsmoke, Merv Griffin, Good Morning America, Mary Tyler Moore, Bob Newhart, Rhoda, Alice, National Geographic, Charlie's Angels, and Name That Tune among regularly scheduled shows. Among the occasional events, the nod went to the Masters' Tournament, Great Performances at Wolf Trap, opera, and Poldark.

The most frequent reasons given for liking these programs were that they provided laughter, that the stories told were solid, and that they were effectively so because of good plot, acting, and because they were unique. They were said--these favorites--to have the capacity to involve the emotions if they were stories, to provide competitive involvement if they were game shows, to convey information that was worth having if the shows fell into the public service category.

In this same session, programs most frequently mentioned as being disliked, besides sports among the women and soap operas among the men, were The Newlywed Game, all situation comedies ("because they're not worth a damn"),

Johnny Carson ("because he's filthy"), any story that had socially aware heroes or heroines ("because I'm tired of the formula"), any dance program, Wonder Woman, and The Incredible Hulk ("these are comic book shows and they shouldn't be scheduled in the evening"). Two shows that aroused controversy were Soap, because some thought it morally objectionable, while others termed it "funny" and "kooky," and The Gong Show, which some said was beneath contempt while others said it was so stupid it could not help but be entertaining. The mention of The Gong Show in all groups never failed to bring up this same polarity of response.

Other well-known programs that usually appeared on both sides of the ledger were Little House on the Prairie and The Waltons (pleasant upbeat family viewing for some, indigestible sentimentality to others), All in the Family (good comedy and good writing vs ridiculous stereotypes), Columbo (exciting, relaxing, and also stupid and needlessly violent), Three's Company, McMillan and Wife, Baretta, and Charlie's Angels. It became clear that an

attitude that valued a given program could have been formed by the feeling that its entertainment coefficients were high while one that disparaged it could as easily have been determined by a perception that it was not sufficiently significant. In other words, content very often took a back seat to considerations of professionalism.

Programs of impact

Moving beyond the category of regular programming likes and dislikes, the respondents indicated which programs or telecasts of any kind had made impressions on them they thought might be lasting if, indeed, they already were not so. Many of these people were quick to mention special events, such as the assassination of Oswald and the funeral of Kennedy, the Olympic games, the landing of the man on the moon, and the Watergate hearings. Others mentioned specials such as a live ballet or opera telecast or favorite shows they thought had enduring worth, such as those sponsored by the National Geographic

or produced by Walt Disney or segments of regularly programmed shows, e.g., Steve Martin's appearances on Saturday Night Live. Very often the question of what shows had stayed with these viewers did not fail to prompt mention of Roots and Holocaust, especially the former, which usually more than half the members of any one session had seen in toto and generally all but one or two had seen at least part of. These two were mentioned as memorable because, it was claimed, they had contained so much material that was revelatory and important and because the execution was considered exceptionally skillful.

- Holocaust and Roots were based on facts, on human life and misery. These things really happened.
- These programs made an impression because they were about things that happened to your people.
- They both contained a lot of information. They made me more sympathetic to the people these things happened to.
- I think they made me more sensitive to contemporary problems. I think I'm more alert where injustice is concerned.

- It was part of history. You saw what others have gone through. They helped you to understand people. They changed you. With Holocaust you got to realize that all this could happen again.

Some people said they had not watched Holocaust because they had no appetite to view man's inhumanity to man, while others replied that that was exactly why they wanted to look at it and so to profit from the information. Many felt these programs were able to make such an impact on them because the production values of both had been geared to such a lavish scale, the scripts were sophisticated, the story lines riveting, the actors totally professional (and often recognizable), and the scenery and location shooting handled with tremendous care. Only a few expressed feelings that both Roots and Holocaust were in a certain manner fabrications, either false witnesses to what had actually taken place or, especially in the case of Holocaust, a prettification of an even uglier truth that could not be transformed into entertainment.

The Roots and Holocaust phenomena had many more

ramifications than these people merely watching the programs, absorbing them, and remembering them. Many of the respondents spoke of the pivotal position the broadcasts of these two programs had in their lives during the days they were being shown, how they transformed their normal routines to accommodate the hours the Roots and Holocaust installments were exhibited.

- I made sure the kids were in bed early so we'd have the set to ourselves.
- I gave up seeing customers those nights. I wanted to see the programs, and so did everyone else.
- I didn't shop for food.
- Every time the phone rang, I'd tell people on the other end to call back later.
- I gave up my bowling night.

It was apparent that some of the respondents did not mind this interruption of their schedules. In fact they appeared very much to equate the disruption with the specialness of the program. Others, however, said that having the program in serial form several nights in succession

made for difficulties with which they were not willing to cope.

- There was no way I was going to have four nights in a row free to see all of Holocaust, so I didn't watch it at all.

- You get into something like Roots or Holocaust, and then you miss a section and you feel cheated. I'd prefer it if they did the whole thing at once without all the recaps that just made it longer than it had to be. Or they could do it every Monday or something like that.

Talking about TV

The series format provoked similar discussion when such novel dramatizations as Rich Man, Poor Man and Seventh Avenue were mentioned, some obviously quite willing to meet the time demands and others saying that they hesitated to get involved in these events because of their scheduling rigidity. However, it was clearly indicated that Roots and Holocaust alone of the series talked about had the capacity to excite subsequent discussion.

- At the office everyone was talking about Roots. Everybody wanted to hear everybody else's opinion.

- If you hadn't seen Roots the night before, you really felt out of it at work or whenever everybody got together.

To a lesser extent, it was also said that other programs could provoke an exchange of comments, but it was apparent that it was just that: comment, and not extended discussion.

- My friends and I sometimes talk about the soaps, especially when one of us has missed an episode and we want to catch up with the action.

- You might share a joke with a friend that you heard on a program, like what the Coneheads said on Saturday Night Live.

- At my place if you don't watch Monday Night Football you're really out of it on the coffee break.

Apropos of the last comment, the occasional power of television to stimulate and perhaps often form the solid core of discussion material among co-workers or associates of any kinds was attested to by one woman who said that her husband did not really like football but watched it anyway so that he could hold up his end with his more enthusiastic colleagues.

As has been mentioned, some public television programs made it with these respondents into the truly memorable class, and a few said that certain PTV series, such as Upstairs, Downstairs, The Adams Chronicles, Poldark, I, Claudius, and Anna Karenina had held their allegiance as much as Roots or Holocaust, although, with their non-sequential scheduling, their position was really never entirely equatable. Also, it was said, because the material of these series was either remote or fictional in comparison with the intense relevancy of Roots and Holocaust, the PTV series did not present themselves as candidates for next-day heated discussion. Also, it was somewhat apparent that those who did regularly watch PTV series did not seem to enjoy the universality of shared experiences that blockbuster commercial series were able to command.

The public versus the commercial experience

Here then was one small area of commercial-versus-public comparison, at least where there was some tangential relationship between programming and when that relationship

was acknowledged. More often, however, the broad consensus in each group, and even among those who said that their household saw a good deal of public television, was that commercial television and public television basically served two different functions, i.e., that commercial broadcasting was set up to entertain while public broadcasting was there to educate. In fact, in the majority of groups it was said that the local public channel was the "educational" channel. This perception appeared to derive its strength from a combination of factors. One basic one was that the local channel was often identified with its earliest days when it offered classroom-type programming geared to adult education needs. Many of the respondents still associated their public channel with these classroom images and said educational television was fine for those who wanted to learn something specific, that it answered the needs of various small coteries of people who were avid for self-improvement of some sort.

Another very specific stimulus for dubbing public television "educational" was the attitude that public

television was most typically represented by its programming for the young, that Sesame Street, Mister Rogers, and The Electric Company were the most representative offerings provided. A great number of respondents appeared to believe that public television had no greater function than to act as a supplementary source of information and learning opportunities for the junior members of their household. That public television might provide adult fare of any stripe, be it educational or entertainment, did not readily occur to them.

- I used to watch educational television with my children, but now that they're grown up we don't watch those programs anymore.

- I like public television because I know there won't be any violence on it so it's OK for the kids to watch.

Others said that they were aware of adult programming as it existed today on public television but they still would dub it "educational" broadcasting because its appeal was geared either to those who were seeking specialized information in the old tradition of educational television or because they viewed the entertainment that

public television featured as "serious," "classic," "demanding," "highbrow," or "special," definitely not in the same league with the kind of immediately gratifying entertainment one could find on commercial channels.

- Watching public television is like going to the Guthrie theater and seeing a bunch of Shakespeare, which is a waste of time.
- Public television has mostly dance and goofy stage plays.

Admittedly, this was a polar, negative view of the entertainment value of public television, but it had its spokesmen in almost every group. The broader view toward public television in addition to the fact of dubbing it as primarily educational in intent and content, was seen in innumerable ways, most of them based on some sort of comparison with commercial television. These top-of-head oppositions pointed toward deep-seated attitudes toward not only public television but to commercial television and to the uses of television in general.

- Public television is more cultural. It's classical. It has controversy. Commercial television is more elaborate. It has more money.

- Educational television has more music and ballet. Regular television has more for everybody. Regular television is lighter. They have more choice.

- Public television is more stimulating. Commercial television has more color.

- Public television is better for children than for adults. For kids it can be entertaining and educational at the same time. But the programs for adults are just educational. The kids can get a laugh, but their parents have to think. With commercial television you don't have to think.

- Public television is peaceful. They select their programs more carefully than commercial networks. You don't turn on public television just to have the set on.

- You get information from public television. Nothing sticks on the regular stations.

- There's no excitement on public television. You have to pay a lot more attention than you do with commercial television. You have to give your whole self.

- On commercial television you get stars. They don't have stars on the public station.

- There's more competition among the commercial networks, so you get more variety and better shows. With public television there's no choice.

- Educational television is repetitive and dull. They show a lot of local stuff that is strictly amateur. Commercial television is all professional. Everything is on film, and that's professional. If it's live, it can't really be professional.

- Commercial television is slicker, but public television is more constructive. It tells you more about history.

- Educational television has a lot of English theater on it that you don't hear much about beforehand. Commercial television shows are better publicized.

- On educational television you don't expect excitement, violence, sex, mystery, escapism, fantasy, news, or enthusiasm. It's all in a monotone.

- Public television broadens your horizons more than commercial television does.

- Educational television doesn't attempt to entertain you. Commercial television is all entertainment.

- Educational television is amateurish technically. It just deals with the basics. It doesn't use Hollywood backdrops or costumes like commercial television. On educational television a dancer would dance to a piano accompaniment in a leotard and not in a thousand-dollar costume.

- Public television shows are informative and uncut. They don't have censorship like with network programs. (It is interesting to note that in this remark the use of the word "network" to mean "commercial" was indicative of

a widely held perception that kept coming to the fore that public television was more independent in its basic organization than the commercial channels, that there was little sense of the public stations belonging to a network of their own.)

- Public television demands more. You have to listen hard to what they are saying. Sometimes you have to listen hard to understand the English accents. With Nova, for instance, you have to watch all of it, while if you were watching a football game it wouldn't matter if you got up and went for a beer and missed a couple of plays.

- In the stories they show on public television all the stories happen in the olden days. It's not up to date like commercial television.

- Educational television doesn't have comedy and pretty girls. Even when they have comedy on, like with Monty Python, it's educational because they're telling you about the English sense of humor.

Certain words kept cropping up in descriptions of commercial television and of public television that were tip-offs as to why one or the other might be a more acceptable alternative (especially commercial television), and were then expanded on to underline why these respondents felt public television might be rejected in favor of the commercial channels.

- Public television is:

information	highbrow
not well-funded	silly
children-oriented	inconvenient
well-produced	nonsexy
well-acted	unsparkly
cultural	dry
thought-provoking	conservative
stimulating	uninteresting
special	absorbing
intellectual	fulfilling
dull	challenging
boring	drab
	stuffy

- Commercial television is:

relaxing	junk
fun	extravagant
variety	stereotyped
family viewing	ridiculous
frivolous	uninteresting

condescending	frightening
tasteless	violent
a waste of time	suggestive
light	destructive
enjoyable	appealing
comical	annoying
fantasy	lively
live	popular
top entertainment	action
special	oomph
spicy	gusto
predictable	pizzazz
release	suspense

- People don't watch public television because the programs don't hold your interest. They're long and there are no interruptions. People have short attention spans.
- You can't do other things while you're watching public television.
- People think public television will be dry, so they don't watch it.
- There are no celebrities on public television, so there's nobody to relate to.

- There are no movies on public television, so that's why a lot of people aren't going to watch it.

- They don't watch public television because they don't want to look at some guy sitting on a stool talking.

- People don't watch public television because of the hangover from the days when it was just educational.

- People don't want to watch public television because family pressure is against it, and people want to watch television together as a family.

- People aren't interested in public television because the classroom is a turn-off to them. People feel they don't need any more education. They think it's going to be repetitious, like school. And school was boring. They don't want any more lecture. They want to relax.

- Learning involves effort. And working people are too tired to make an effort. Public television is for women who stay at home.

In general it was indicated--and this emanated as much from PTV viewers as from nonviewers--that one had to plan or was likely to plan more for public television viewing than one did for time spent with the commercial networks. At the same time the parallel opinion was that the very act of watching PTV required much more attention

and could be less casually experienced than commercial television.

Other revealing areas of comparison attitudes toward PTV and CTV were turned up by lines of questioning that were less direct. For example, the respondents were invited to imagine what Roots or Holocaust, programs that appeared to have more commonality than any others that had been named, might have been like if they had been produced by public television rather than commercial.

- They would have not had any stars in them. They wouldn't have had any scope. It would have been more like on a stage.

- There would have been less scenery. The producers would have been less concerned with scenery.

- I think Holocaust would have been more toned down. There might have been more real drama. It would have been more factual, less glossy, but probably not as enjoyable because of no production extras.

- Maybe there would have been more intimate camera work. They always seem to do that on public television. And I think with Roots that the public network would not have demanded any changes in the book to make the story more commercial.

- I think Roots would have been longer. It might have looked different, too, not as sharp somehow.

- They couldn't have been as good because public television doesn't have the money. Maybe they would have been in black and white.

- They would have been more like documentaries than stories.

- They would have to have cut corners, like using Civil War footage.

- They might have been shorter because there wouldn't have been all those commercials, and the commercial networks wanted to spread them out.

- The actors wouldn't have been as good. Also the direction and the writing would not have been as good.

- They wouldn't have had any impact on public television because public television doesn't publicize its programs.

- There wouldn't have been any actual scenes because they would have had to fake all the locations.

Viewer imagery

In another vein, but still serving to point up differences in public and commercial perception, these respondents were asked to think about differences in people who

watched these two types of programming. (It should be noted here that when the groups were requested to estimate what part of <u>their</u> viewing time concentrated on public television, figures ranged all the way from zero to 40 per cent, with the average somewhere around ten. It should be kept in mind, though, that many at the higher end of this spectrum were parents who accounted for their heavy public participation as achieved through their children's watching habits.) Interestingly, many of the respondents were more apt to declare that no set image of the two types of watchers existed in their minds, that people were more inclined to go back and forth than limit themselves to one or the other, and that television viewing habits were not a function necessarily of income, education, or similar determinants. Still, others did come up with some statements that hinted at the possible nurturing of certain stereotypes.

- Public television watchers are choosy. They want information.
- Commercial television viewers have less education. Their conversation isn't as broad.

- Teenagers don't watch public television.
- People who don't watch public television are uninformed, not intellectual.
- People who watch educational television don't like violence.
- Public television watchers are affluent and educated.
- People who watch public television are in search of knowledge.
- The masses watch commercial television. They have something for everyone.

What the celebrities do

Again, it must be emphasized that the general pattern of response in each group where this question was advanced was for certain limiting statements to be made, then for them to be vetoed by many of the group who refused to believe that either kind of viewer could be profiled so handily. As a check to this, a more specific exercise was used, and that was for the respondents to decide what certain well-known people were likely to prefer in their home-viewing.

Billy Carter

- He watches commercial television because he's a banal person, not an intellectual, and is interested in escapism.

Marian Anderson

- She watches both kinds but probably more of public television because they have more cultural things on.

Robert Redford

- He watches both kinds.

- No, he watches public because of his interest in ecology. He's concerned, sensitive, and aware, involved in using his intellect.

Elizabeth Taylor

- She watches commercial television because she only cares about movie star glamour.

Bert Reynolds

- He watches both. He's starting to watch more public television because he's trying to get away from his good ole boy image.

Henry Kissinger

- He likes public television because he's a more cultured man.

- No, he's above culture and isn't interested in other people's analyses of the news, so he watches commercial television.

George Wallace

- He watches commercial television because public television is of no value to him.

Farah Fawcett-Majors

- She watches commercial television because she's fluffy-brained.

Billy Graham

- He watches both, but he likes public television because there's no violence and because he's choosy and an intellectual.

Mohammed Ali

- He watches commercial television because he likes smart remarks, like you get with Johnny Carson. He doesn't feel that he needs any more education.

John Wayne

- He watches commercial channels because he's a regular Joe. He's not cultured and he doesn't think he needs any more education.

Anita Bryant

- She watches public television because she's against sex. There are no jiggles on the public channels.
- No, she watches commercial programs because she's a shallow person and all she wants is entertainment.

Why not more public television?

This ever-repeated conclusion that the salient demarcation between public and commercial television was relative emphasis on entertainment was not always universally agreed to. For one thing, many of those who watched drama or series offered by public television pointed out that these were in their way as polished, if not as controversial, as Roots or Holocaust, but that furthermore they could compete on the same basis of respect for

elaborate production values. It was then said by these people that such series as Upstairs, Downstairs were as involving as a soap opera and that I, Claudius had been as salacious as anything seen on the commercial channels. Why, then, it was asked, were not these programs, which were geared to immediate response--indeed responses that were understood by commercial programming--not watched by more of the respondents?

Many times the answer to this question appeared to be that no matter what the product was, if it was brought in via a public channel, it was prejudged as arty, intellectual, hard to understand, and of specialized interest only. For many it was simply hard to believe that anything shown on public television could be entertaining and relaxing. And it was true that occasionally an inveterate public television watcher would analyze a personally positive response to public television entertainment as being worthwhile because it was educational. For example, some said that Upstairs, Downstairs had value because it taught people about a way of life that was unfamiliar, that I, Claudius was historical,

and that the George Sand plays were of literary interest before they were effective drama. But, and this is a very large and often reiterated "but," the principal reason claimed for not watching what could be primarily entertaining on public television, or indeed for not watching what might satisfy a specialized interest, was that people simply did not know what there was available. Many of the respondents said during the course of discussion that after hearing from other group members the virtues of public television they would now pay more attention to it. Still, they said, the lack of promotion of a program had up to then insured their ignorance. This unawareness was attributed to three factors: one, no promotion and advertising, either in print media or on other television channels; two, lack of descriptions of content in newspaper listings or in TV Guide; and three, perhaps most importantly, viewing habits did not allow for deviation from the expected.

- We're geared to watch commercial television, not public television.

- Television is the three major networks. It started out that way. The public

channel is minor. It doesn't advertise. You forget about it and lose interest.

- We didn't watch Upstairs, Downstairs in in our house, although I had heard a lot about it because there was something more familiar on at the same time on the commercial station. I forget what.

- I never turn on public television because I don't know what's on when, and whenever I do tune it in at random, it's some ballet.

- If I watch TV only X hours a week, I want to watch what I know. I never heard of these educational TV shows.

At the same time, the disagreement that public television was all information when compared to the all-entertainment values of commercial television was broadened by the opinion that commercial television was beginning to do an excellent job with programs that were basically informative: documentaries, special investigative reports, and the often-mentioned 60 Minutes and 20/20.

Future desires

The respondents were asked, after so many of the above opinions had been vented, what they would like to see in

the future in the way of new or different types of programs or in changes in emphasis or style. The answers, as might be expected, ranged over a broad area, but a certain demand for seriousness kept being iterated along with a desire for basic improvement in entertainment values as they already existed.

- I would like to see more live shows. I like it when they catch realism.
- I want more comedy. I want to laugh more.
- I'd like it if they had more Phil Donahue-type things. Sort of a higher-class Johnny Carson. (The Donahue format, as a model for future programming, was endorsed by several panels.)
- I'd like to see more documentaries--the way they make them in England.
- I'd like there to be more Christian programs.
- More family-type programs, Walt Disney-type things. (A demand for programming the family as a unit could enjoy was stated in almost every session.)
- We need more variety shows that don't imitate each other.
- More nature programs, more like Wild Kingdom.
- More drama.

- More programs that give you household help.

- More Western movies.

- War stories.

- Old comedy shows, like Your Show of Shows, Ernie Kovacs and Abbott and Costello.

- More about American history. (This respondent had not heard about The Adams Chronicles.)

- Science fiction.

- Medical programs.

- Less crime, less humor, less sex, less violence /anti-violence and sex sentiments were well represented in all cities/, less schmaltz and corn.

- Programs about contemporary problems.

- Fewer soap operas.

- Better cartoons, more funny history things the way Steve Allen does them.

- I'd like for there to be more sports, movies, and documentaries on commercial television, and they should get rid of the soap operas and sex and violence in prime time.

- Public television should stay the way it is and keep programs for special interest. The only thing they should get rid of are the boring lectures and the boring interviews.

- Public television should have more American programs, rather than English ones all the time.

- I'd like to see more good clean pictures with meaningful plots.

- No sex education. More family shows like The Waltons and Little House on the Prairie.

- Less violent cartoons.

- More specialized sports programs. I'm tired of football all the time.

- More shows like 60 Minutes and CBS Reports. More investigations like the one they did on asbestos.

- More consumer reports.

Television impact assessment--now and tomorrow

The question of the impact of television was, of course, a broad one, and was certainly alluded to in the discussion of television habits and preferences in general and in the dissection of attitudes toward commercial and public broadcasting. However, it was zeroed in on in several more direct ways: one, by asking the respondents what they thought the impact of the tube had been on their lives till now, and two, what they predicted

for the future.

It would be fair to say that the analysis of the present effect was just about equally divided between predominantly negative and mostly positive conclusions. The questions in each group tended to produce a quite clear demarcation between opinions and to excite vivid debate.

- Television has made us lazy. We watch too much. It controls our lives. Communication within the family has broken down.

- We've become passive and less well-informed because we don't read as much anymore, not even newspapers.

- We get more information now than our parents were able to get, so we are better informed because of television. We are more aware of what's going on in the world.

- There's more communication within the family because television stimulates us to talk about issues.

- TV has pulled families apart and it's made children unresourceful. My kid the other day said that she was bored and didn't know what to do because there was nothing to watch. Kids are passive now, not like when I was growing up.

- Television has shown us that there are marvelous things to see in the world, both the greatest and the most horrible. It has made us feel a part of things. We've been exposed to the world. The Vietnam War was played in our homes like a television series.

- The impact of television has been that people, and especially children, imitate violence. There was that rape with a beer bottle because of Born Innocent.

- Television has provided us with a cheap and colorful entertainment source.

- Because of television we don't do anything anymore. We just stay home all the time.

- Television goes against the grain of the American work ethic. It prevents you from doing what you should be doing.

- I used to be more involved in activities of all kinds. Television has stopped a lot of them.

- It has made problems for children. They grow up too fast. Now six- and eight-year-olds know about abortion and sex.

- We now belong to a generation whose entire lives have been formed by what is seen on television. We have been subjected to a slow form of brainwashing by seeing the same things over and over again.

- The depiction of violence so realistically has made us numb to it.

- Our horizons have been broadened and broadened more quickly, the way they never could have been in the days before television. People know more about each other these days.

- Television has kept people riled up, like about the war in Vietnam in the sixties or about Civil Rights. It has contributed to unrest.

- Television has tended to make everybody in America think more alike. We're all fed the same stuff.

For the future, the predictions were perhaps not so equally divided among the positive and the negative, a great deal of trepidation, more than optimism, expressed concerning television's potential. A significant number also disagreed as to whether the importance of television in their lives--be it of positive or negative weight --would loom larger or smaller.

- I think there will be more dependence on TV for everything. People will want to leave their homes even less than they do now. People will talk to their neighbors less.

- We will probably use television more as a way to learn.

- It will mean that our initiative will decrease.

- We will rely so much on television that it will be difficult for us to tell what is real and what is false.

- People will read books even less than they do now because of television.

- People will probably be more selective about what they watch on television.

- Children will grow more passive and less creative. They won't bother to play with blocks or erector sets.

- We'll be more enslaved to television and we'll get less exercise. We'll lose our imaginations and forget how to entertain ourselves.

- Television will be used to control people more. That's always a possibility.

- The impact of television in the future will be less than it has been because the novelty will have worn off.

- Television will really form our values and moral codes. It's frightening what it could do. It could take over our minds with that subliminal stuff. People will accept as true anything as long as they've seen it on TV.

- Television will get more destructive if it keeps going in the same direction, especially for families' and children's morals.

- I don't believe that there will be any difference in the future except for maybe some technical changes.

- Television will get more frank in subjects and languages, like movies are today, so that people will be likely to discuss things much more openly than they do today.

- Children will suffer because people will continue not to screen what their children see.

- Television will continue to be just a supplement in my life, so it won't play any larger part.

- We will get so much more raw information that we won't have a chance to think about it or the time to digest it.

- Television will have more of an impact on our lives because it will be the only kind of entertainment that people will be able to afford.

- Television will have a more positive impact because the networks will respond to the demands of their consumers.

- The impact will be less because more and more people are getting bored with television. There will be less watching. Young people already don't watch television. They want to be outdoors and doing things. My kids don't watch it all that much. One of them won't have anything to do with it.

- People will continue to be individualistic, so television can't have any more of a mass impact than it already has had.

- Television will become the chief medium of exchange between people.

- Television will be able to invade everybody's privacy. It will be the focal point of everyone's life because of the Beta Max, the game attachments. We'll do everything by television, including shopping.

- There will be less crime and violence because less will be shown on television because everyone will start objecting to it.

- There will be more crime and violence because more will be shown.

- TV's influence can't be any worse than it has already been.

- People will be more isolated.

Some of the respondents felt that they could make a distinction between future impacts of public and commercial broadcasting.

- Public television will reflect more of what people want than commercial television will.

- Public television will have more of an impact in the future than commercial because it will help people know more about what is going on in the world.

- Public TV will be more important because people will get tired of the pap that is shown on the commercial stations.

- Commercial television will get more sophisticated and liberal. Public and commercial television will get to be more similar.

- No, public television will continue to experiment, but commercial television never will because it won't be able to risk money.

- Our ideas about the world will change because we will have more information through public television.

Quite apart from what these respondents expected in the way of future impact, a few suggested what they would specifically like, that is, what they would like beyond certain kinds of programming.

- I want more challenge.

- I want more answers and not so many questions.

- No, I want more questions. I'll take care of my own answers.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

I

A. How spend leisure time/weekdays and weekends?

TV	Working around house	
Reading	Socializing (being with people)	
Movies	Enjoying family	
Hobbies	Listening to radio	
Sports	Theater	Restaurants

B. When tend to spend time with TV vs other activities?

Are weekends different from weekdays with respect to how spend time?

(If YES) How? Why?

C. About how many hours of TV do you watch in a typical week? (go around room)

1) I'd like to hear about all of the reasons for turning on the TV.

Entertainment	Relaxation	Pass time
Information	Education	Learning
For company	Destroy silence	

Material for discussing with friends, etc.

2) How do you learn about what's on TV?

3) Is the viewing planned or is the set just turned on?

a) Who tends to control the main set in the family?

b) Make date with TV set? When?

c) Tend to watch same programs each week or change off? Why? What influences the decision?

d) How evaluate time you watch? Is it worthwhile? What do you get out of it?

e) Do you feel satisfied after an evening of watching TV? Why/why not?

f) What do if didn't watch?

II

A. What are some of your favorite programs?

B. Why do you like (__favorite__)?

1) How describe in only one or two words the way your favorite program affects you. What would you say? What else?

a) Anyone else watch _____? How would you describe that program (in one or two words)?

(It is necessary to spend some time on getting single-word descriptions of favorite programs and unfavorable programs.)

b) What enjoy most when watching it? Why that?

2) Are there any programs you dislike and do not watch?

a) How describe those in one word?

b) What in particular don't you like about _____? How do they affect you?

3) Does everyone agree or do some of you like the same program? What in particular do you like about it?

III

A. How feel about noncommercial TV as compared to commercial TV? Why do you feel that way? Can you give me any specific examples of that?

B. What things have you heard people say about noncommercial TV? How do you refer to it? Why that way?

(Introduce NONCOMMERCIAL TV if not already mentioned)

C. How many of you watch PTV?

1) How many hours a week?

2) How compare to hours watching commercial TV?

3) Why do you feel there is that kind of difference/no difference?

4) How characterize viewing of PTV? Planned/only specific types of programs. What kinds?

5) PTV more planned? More "demanding" on you?

D. What do you feel are the real differences between Commercial Television and Public TV?

1) What kinds of shows are on PTV?

2) What kinds of people watch PTV? How differ from Commercial TV?

3) What kinds of people not watch PTV?

Play a little game. Why not PTV??

E. In past week what was watched that stayed with you?

1) Why?

2) Talk about it?

3) How felt?

4) Discussed with peers?

5) Impact on lives?
- Roots?
- Holocaust?

6) Shows argued about?

IV <u>TELEVISION, AND ITS IMPACT UPON OUR LIVES COMMERCIAL VS PUBLIC</u>

A. What changed? How changed? Why that? Other?

B. How affected us? Why?

C. How feel about impact of one vs other? Why?

D. Future impact? Why that? Other?

1) How? What specifically? Why that?
2) How felt? Why that way? Other?
3) Who most affected? Why? How?

E. What replacing? Why that? Other?

F. Effect upon the family? How? Why that way?

G. How feel about overall effect? Why?

H. What anticipate doing in the future? Why?